Novit. No. 1580: 13) into including Western Australian breeders in *P. m. gouldi*.

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Taxonomic Status of Pheasant Coucal, Red-tailed Black-cockatoo and Red-backed Fairy-wren in the Pilbara, Western Australia — Storr (1984, Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl. no. 16: 39) recognised Pilbara Pheasant Coucals (*Centropus phasianinus highami [Mathews]*) as a larger subspecies than the Kimberley-Cape York Peninsula *melanurus* Gould, whereas Mason *et al.* (1984, *Emu* 84: 1-15) combined it with *melanurus*. Storr gave the wing length as 286, and 296 mm for two female *highami* versus 247-263 mm for six female *melanurus* from the Kimberley and Northern Territory. Mason *et al.* gave 243, and 255 mm for two males and 280, and 282 mm for two females of *highami* and 240±7.1 mm for seven males and 267±4.4 mm for three females from the Kimberley and argued that the Pilbara population was a general extension of a north-south cline in the size of *melanurus*, and was not different in plumage colour. However, data in their Figure 3, a plot of wing-length versus latitude, indicate no size cline in *melanurus*.

A female (WAM A 20396) collected in tall sedge understorey of cadjeput forest at Skull Springs, Davis River, on 6 May 1986 had a wing of 243 mm. This small bird does not support the retention of *highami* as a distinct large subspecies; however the specimen might have been incorrectly sexed. Though the Pilbara population is sometimes treated as an isolate it may be narrowly connected with the Kimberley one along the coastal strip contiguous with the Eighty-Mile Beach; coucals have been seen in dunes at Cape Keraudren and in paper-bark swamps on Anna Plains Station (Storr 1984, *ibid*; Ford 1987, *West. Aust. Nat.* 16).

Red-tailed Black Cockatoo

Ford (1980, *Emu* 80: 103-120) mapped a supposedly isolated population of the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus magnificus*) along the upper De Grey drainage (mainly the Davis and Oakover Rivers) but had no specimen for subspecific determination. He suggested that birds along this river system might belong to either the Kimberley subspecies *macrorhyncus* or the coastal mid-western *samueli*. The third subspecies in Western Australia, *naso* of the forested lower south-west, was ruled out on geography.

On 6 May 1986 I collected three specimens from a flock of 34 Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos at Skull Springs. Their measurements (WAM A20390, WAM A20389 and WAM A20388 respectively) in mm are: 390, 385, 360; tail 252, 245, 245; culmen length 44.1, 47.0, 41.1, upper mandible width at base 28.0, 16.0, 25.7, lower mandible width at base 30.1, 30.5, 29.5; upper mandible depth 29.9, 29.2, 29.2; and weight 660, 660, 565 g. A female has dull yellowish spots on the face. Both measurements and colouration demonstrate that the population in the north-eastern Pilbara belongs to *samueli*, and so it may be intermittently connected to the main population of *samueli* further south.

Red-backed Fairy-wren
Storr (1984, *Rec. West. Aust. Mus.* Supp. no. 16: 51) reported the first known occurrence of the Red-backed Fairy-wren (*Malurus melanocephalus*) for the Pilbara — an isolated population discovered by John Darnell in coastal low scrub and tall grass on dunes about Cape Keraudren. On 24 February 1986 I collected a nuptial-plumaged male (WAM A20233) at Cape Keraudren. It has a deep red back and short tail as in the subspecies *cruentatus* which ranges across tropical northern Australia from the Kimberley to Cape York Peninsula. The only other subspecies, nominate *melanocephalus*, has an orange back in the male and a long tail, and occurs in coastal eastern Australia from north-eastern Queensland to north-eastern New South Wales (Schodde 1982, *The Fairy Wrens*: 102-107).

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Turtle egg predation by the Golden Bandicoot (*Isoodon auratus*) on Barrow Island — In Australia sea turtle eggs are taken by several terrestrial predators including varanid lizards, foxes, dingoes, pigs and humans (Limpus 1982). On Barrow Island, off the Pilbara coast of Western Australia, the Perentie *Varanus giganteus* is believed to be the major predator of turtle eggs (Green *et al.* 1986, and pers. obs).

During visits to the turtle nesting beaches on the west coast of Barrow Island in November 1985 and 1986, I observed the Golden Bandicoot (*Isoodon auratus*) eating Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) eggs. The eggs were taken either during the egg laying process, with the bandicoot descending into the nesting chamber (45 cm deep) and eating the eggs as they were laid, or when the nests were dug up by the bandicoots following the nesting process. Bandicoots were commonly seen on the beaches at night and nesting turtles usually had one or two bandicoots in attendance waiting to consume the eggs. In one instance one bandicoot consumed 6 out of 42 eggs and in another nest 10 out of 60 eggs were consumed by 2 bandicoots. In this latter instance, one of the bandicoots was killed when the turtle covered in the nest and trapped the bandicoot in the nesting chamber.

These observations suggest that the Golden Bandicoot is a significant predator of turtle eggs on Barrow Island, and their actions in digging up turtle nests probably also permits easier daytime predation of the remaining eggs by sea birds and perenties. Exposed eggs would also be killed by the high daytime temperatures. It was also interesting to observe occasional water rats (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) on the beaches at night, and these too may predate turtle eggs.